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**KT photo | Tim Bath**

## **WMS student nearly makes National Spelling Bee semifinals**

*By Rob Burgess*  
**Tribune night editor**

**Oxon Hill, Md.** — Even though he read the dictionary twice, Western Middle School sixth-grader Pranav Haran still came up just short of advancement in the 85th Scripps National Spelling Bee on Wednesday.

In March, Haran won the Kokomo Tribune regional bee by correctly spelling “diurnal,” which allowed him to advance to the national competition held in Oxon Hill, Md.

The competition was broadcast on ESPN and began with a computer test Tuesday. In the first round, Haran spelled 11 out of 25 possible words correctly.

In the second round, Haran spelled “salaam” correctly, and in the third round, aced the word “mulligan.” The scores for the first, second and third rounds are combined to select the 50 semifinalists.

Thursday's semifinals will not include the youngest speller in bee history, 6-year-old Lori Anne Madison of Lake Ridge, Va., although she made a valiant effort. Lori Anne misspelled one of her two words during the preliminary rounds — “ingluvies,” which she started with an “e” — and her score on Tuesday's computer test wasn't enough to make up the difference.

Only one semifinalist advanced with a perfect score — 10-year-old Vanya Shivashankar of Olanthe, Kan. Vanya's sister, Kavya, won the 2009 National Spelling Bee. On Wednesday, the fifth-grader spelled “debellation” and “auteur” with obvious ease, and she got all 25 scored words right on Tuesday's 50-word computer test — including “semelparous” and “outrecuidance.”

This year's winner gets \$30,000 in cash, a trophy, a \$2,500 savings bond, a \$5,000 scholarship, \$2,600 in reference works from the Encyclopedia Britannica and an online language course.

Paige P. Kimble, director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, announced that the qualifying score for the semifinals was going to be lower than the last year because of the difficulty level.

The qualifying score was lowered to 23 correct answers.

Haran had 17.

“Pranav thinks it is a good learning experience and should be better prepared for the coming year,” said Lalita Haran, Pranav Haran’s mother.

Pranav Haran said the computerized test was “really hard.”

“The average score this year was way lower,” he said.

Pranav Haran said that despite the fact that he estimated his daily study time at six hours, he would be ramping it up in preparation for next time around.

“I’m definitely going to up my prep time another hour per day,” he said.

- The Associated Press and Lindsey Ziliak, Tribune education reporter, also contributed to this story.